

CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION
STAFF REPORT

August 5, 2004

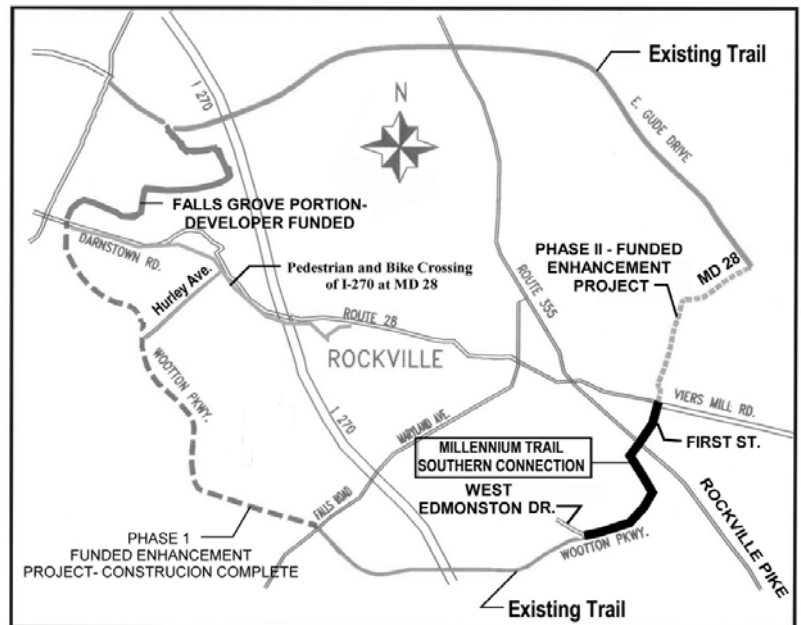
SUBJECT:

Mandatory Referral of the
**Millennium Trail Southern
Connection**

Applicant: City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Property Location:
from West Edmonston Drive
to Veirs Mill Road

Planning Commission Review Date:
August 11, 2003



I. Summary of Application:

The proposed **Millennium Trail Southern Connection** is the final segment of design for the Rockville Millennium Trail. This 8-to-10 foot wide and 3,600 linear foot portion of the Millennium Trail will provide improved access by residents and visitors to points north and south of this location and connection to the existing trail ending at West Edmonston Drive and trail construction to the north of Veirs Mill Road. These improvements benefit the City regionally, as well as meeting the key goals of providing access to the Town Center, recreational facilities and schools and libraries. Residents identified the “bicycle beltway” as a priority when the Bikeway Master Plan was adopted in 1998. For Rockville to encourage the use of alternative transportation to reduce vehicular congestion, then there needs to be safe, attractive infrastructure built to facilitate this use.

Currently, there is a 4’ sidewalk along westbound Wootton Parkway. The new trail will replace the existing sidewalk with a 10-foot trail (8 feet only where needed due to retaining wall). The majority of the right-of-way for the project is contained within the City-owned Wootton Parkway right-of-way or State right-of-way. One short segment between Fleet Street and Rockville Pike (MD 355) will require the City of Rockville to negotiate an easement agreement for about 0.1 acres with a private landowner. The trail also passes under the existing Metro Bridge, where median narrowing is proposed to provide an appropriate width trail under the bridge. There are no historic structures, historical districts, or archaeological sites within the project area.

With the total estimated construction cost at \$1,365,913 the approved funding allocation is \$677,913 from the Transportation Enhancement Program of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The City of Rockville will participate with \$201,004, which is well over a 20% participation amount. The City of Rockville will also cover all staff and design costs associated with this project, which brings the City's financial commitment to \$678,004.

This project is in compliance with the City of Rockville Comprehensive Plan, City of Rockville Bikeway Master Plan as well as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) guidelines. Every effort has been made to reduce environmental impacts, as there are no forest impacts associated with the project. Stormwater management will be met by future developer improvements associated with an existing SHA pond located along First Street, with a requirement that the City designate \$21,320 to the SWM fund prior to issuance of permits from DPW. SHA is currently reviewing the Final Review submittal of the project. There is no Corp of Engineers permit required for the project, and other necessary permits associated with this project are in the review process with no problems anticipated. There are minor utility adjustments needed for relocation of City street lights and fire hydrants in the corridor.

Public meetings and open houses were held addressing the Bikeway Master Plan, and meetings were held particularly for this project in 2002 and March 2003. Communication with State Highway officials, including Neil Pedersen and Charlie Watkins (District 3), has been ongoing for the past four years or more with regard to Rockville's Millennium Trail Southern Connection, and they have been supportive of this overall project and encouraged the City to apply for Enhancement funds to facilitate the construction. This is clearly a regional improvement considering the proximity to Metro, shopping, libraries and a host of schools and recreational facilities in the vicinity.

II. Mandatory Referral Process & Criteria:

Article 66B, Section 3.08 of the State Annotated Code contain the enabling provisions for the mandatory referral process. In summary, the Planning Commission reviews proposed projects to determine if its location, character, and extent are consistent with the plan. The full text follows:

“ If a local legislative body has adopted a whole plan or a plan for one or more geographic sections or divisions of the local jurisdiction, a publicly or privately owned street, square, park, or other public way, ground, or open space, or public building or structure, or public utility may not be constructed or authorized in the local jurisdiction or the major geographic section of the local jurisdiction until the location, character, and extent of the development has been submitted to and approved by the planning commission as consistent with the plan.

- *The planning commission shall communicate its decision and the reasons for its decision to the local legislative body that has jurisdiction over the financing of the public way, ground, space, building, structure, or utility.*
- *The local legislative body or other body having jurisdiction may overrule the decision by a recorded vote of not less than 2/3 of its entire membership.*

- *If a planning commission fails to act on a submission within 60 days after the date of official submission to the planning commission, the submission shall be considered approved.*
- *If a local legislative body or other body having jurisdiction fails to act within 60 days after the date of submission of the recommendation of the planning commission, the local legislative body with jurisdiction shall be considered to have concurred with the recommendation of the planning commission.*
- *The local legislative body shall adopt the plan as a whole or for one or more major geographic sections or divisions of the jurisdiction, and further shall adopt any amendment or extension thereof or addition thereto.”*

III. Compatibility with the Plan:

Location

The Millennium Trail Southern Connection parallels Wootton Parkway from West Edmonston Drive to First Street and Veirs Mill Road. The Bikeway Master Plan recommended a bikeway beltway (renamed Millennium Trail) along this route.

Character

The plan provides recommendations regarding the general character of bikeways. The plan recommends, “a bikeway be separated from motorized traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within independent right-of-way”. The plan suggest that two-way bike paths should be at least 8 to 10 feet wide and discourages one-way trails since they are likely to be traveled in both directions and are difficult to enforce.

The project consists of an off-road multi-use trail beginning at West Edmonston Drive where the trail will connect to the existing Millennium Trail ending at this intersection. Traveling east the trail runs parallel to Wootton Parkway and First Street and located at the back of curb for the majority of the length due to right-of-way, existing retaining and noise walls, and other physical constraints. Median narrowing is proposed between West Edmonston Drive and Fleet Street of 4 feet of the westbound side only in order to maintain the minimum required trail width and to provide proper roadway travel lane widths. The trail then crosses Fleet Street, Rockville Pike and Veirs Mill Road at the same elevation as the roadway by means of crosswalks. A minor amount of median narrowing on westbound First Street, near the bridge, is also proposed. Well-marked intersection crossings and signage will be a key feature of the bikeway from First Street to Veirs Mill Road. The alignment’s goal is for the Millennium Trail Southern Connection to be completely off road (except for intersections). Additional street trees will be added where possible to enhance the trail.

Extent

Staff finds that the extent of the proposed project is consistent with the plan.

Conclusion

Staff finds that the proposed project’s location, character, and extent are consistent with the approved and adopted 1998 Bikeway Master Plan.